
***The origins of the Swedish Holiness Union Mission in
Pietermaritzburg, 1890-1899***

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Abstract

The Swedish Holiness Union, which had been organised in 1887 as an Arminian-perfectionist addition to the unfolding of Christian nonconformity in Sweden, began to conduct missionary work among the Zulu's of Natal three years later. During the 1890's Oscar Emanuelson and his colleagues engaged in urban evangelisation and other forms of ministry in Pietermaritzburg, where Methodist and Anglican missionaries had been active for many years. The Swedish undertaking was particularly noteworthy because, in contrast to the missionary endeavours of other agencies, which typically concentrated initially on rural areas before undertaking urban work, the Holiness Union's endeavours in southern Africa were partially urban virtually from the outset. Though initially an essentially kerygmatic in nature, the Holiness Union's programme in the capital of Natal soon encompassed, albeit on a small scale, educational and other forms of ministry not dissimilar to those conducted by agencies that proceeded from different confessional foundations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Well before the end of the nineteenth century, missionaries representing numerous Christian denominations responded to the waves of urbanisation in Southern Africa. They responded by shifting part of their work to such cities as Kimberley, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. This was the genesis of a profound trend, which continued to shape the missionary endeavour in the region throughout the twentieth century. It indeed reflected a geographic shift in missions on an almost global scale. Although the

Scandinavians, who participated in this highly significant movement, began to do so decades after British counterparts, many of them Methodists, had blazed their first urban trails, they nevertheless played an important part. This has generally been overlooked by missiologists and historians. By the early 1890's, for example, representatives of the Norwegian Missionary Society, which had been active in rural areas of Natal since the 1840's and established the first permanent stations in the Zulu Kingdom during the following decade, began to minister to members of their congregations who had migrated into Durban. As early as 1889, emissaries of the pan-Scandinavian Free East Africa Mission, a non-denominational agency loosely affiliated with the Norwegian Mission Covenant, undertook a small and fragile evangelistic venture among both Zulu's and resident Scandinavians in the same city.¹ The Church of Sweden Mission (SKM), active in Natal since the late 1870's, entertained a vision of ministering to Zulu migrants in Johannesburg and elsewhere on the Witwatersrand during the 1890's. However, the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1899 necessitated the postponement of that project until after the termination of hostilities in 1902. During the first three decades of the twentieth century it grew to major proportions.

As yet, little of a scholarly, analytical nature has been published about any of these undertakings. Even less has been written about the work of the Swedish Holiness Union during the 1890's in Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal. This diminutive denomination broke new ground in that city with its considerable Zulu and Indian populations. Although its mission there never attained large dimensions, it merits attention as a vital component of what was evolving into, collectively, a fairly major endeavour encompassing several denominations and mission boards. Within the context of Swedish urban missionary history in Southern Africa, the Holiness Union differed markedly from the Church of Sweden Mission by not resting on a foundation of confessional orthodoxy, but springing from the increasingly diverse landscape of Swedish religious nonconformity during the 1880's. Moreover, the administration of the Holiness Union was much simpler and less hierarchical than that of the Lutheran body, and its missionaries generally had less formal education than their university-trained Lutheran counterparts. Finally, the Holiness Union did not have antecedent rural congregations from which converts migrated to

the Natalian capital, and its endeavour was therefore not primarily one of ministering to urbanised Christians. The present article therefore aims to broaden the scope of Swedish missionary history by addressing pivotal neglected aspects of an interdenominational theme.²

2. THE GENESIS OF THE HOLINESS UNION'S ZULU MISSION

Born at Torp in the province of Närke in 1887, the Holiness Union stood under the leadership of Edvard Hedin (1856-1921), a moderately wealthy local farmer, and CJA Kihlstedt (1850-1915), a pastor in the Church of Sweden, who demitted his parish ministry 1889 in order to devote his time to the new movement. Under the leadership of Kihlstedt, the Holiness Union began to publish a monthly periodical titled *Trons Segrar* (i.e. Victories of Faith) in 1890, and it soon became a rich source of information for the new denomination's missionary endeavours.

Otto Witt (1848-1923), the missionary who opened the SKM field in Natal in the late 1870's but left that organisation in 1890, appears to have played a vital role in stimulating the Holiness Union's interest in foreign missions.³ Precisely how he became aware of the Union is unknown. Witt had returned to Natal in 1880 after the Anglo-Zulu War of the previous year had prompted him to take his family to Sweden. He was still away from his homeland when the Holiness Union took shape. It is conceivable that Witt had heard little or nothing about it until the Free East Africa Mission personnel arrived in Durban in August 1889. One of these missionaries, Emelie Häggberg, was affiliated with the Holiness Union and received some of her support from it. In January 1890 Witt wrote to Kihlstedt to introduce himself, explain his relationship to the FEAM personnel, and give a précis of his views of missionary work. Kihlstedt was pleased to relate that his erstwhile Lutheran colleague Witt had submitted his resignation to the SKM. Witt noted that he intended to become an evangelist amongst "the thousands of Kaffers who work in Durban" in the hope of training some of them to propagate the Gospel in their home regions after leaving the city. This was the "only correct way" to do missionary work, he declared in one of the racist generalisations that burdened his correspondence, "because the people as such do not want civilisation, and the few who acquire it are not capable of maintaining it".⁴ At the same time Kihlstedt reprinted letter which Häggberg had

sent to the Norwegian periodical *Missionæren* in *Trons Segrar*. In it she commended Witt's urban emphasis and declared that she and some of her colleagues had begun to have "meetings in the streets, at the harbour, and wherever else we can". She urged sponsors in Scandinavia to contribute more generously to the maintenance of this enterprise.⁵ Witt wrote to Kihlstedt again in June 1890 to give further details of his evangelisation in Durban. Readers of *Trons Segrar* were also treated to this document. Witt assured Kihlstedt that he and his fellows in the FEAM were taking the Gospel to hundreds of migratory labourers in their hostels every evening and that "many" of them were showing great interest in their message. He made it clear, however, as had Häggberg in her own correspondence, that the magnitude of the task necessitated more missionaries in the urban field. Witt cast his remarks in an apocalyptic mould, thus underscoring the urgency of the Holiness Union engaging in missionary work overseas, preferably to augment what he and the FEAM had begun in Durban.⁶

A second and much different factor that stimulated the genesis of the young proto-denomination's interest in foreign missions, was the call for 1 000 Christians to evangelise China by the veteran English medical missionary James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905). Members of the Holiness Union discussed this at their annual conference in 1890, and two men consequently volunteered to help expand that field, which they began to do a few months later.⁷ Before the end of the year the Holiness Union had contributed at least seven men and women to Taylor's China Inland Mission.⁸ Clearly, this pietist Swedish movement had lifted its gaze from sanctification meetings in central Sweden to a global context of evangelisation.

By mid-1890 it was evident that this broader compass would also include Natal. The leaders of the Holiness Union announced in July that Oscar Emanuelson (1862-1921), a former wagon maker from the village of Svanhals, had volunteered to join Witt in Durban. Emanuelson's preparation for this endeavour was slight. In 1889 he joined the Holiness Union and gave up secular work. Early the following year Emanuelson attended a Bible course which Kihlstedt held for prospective evangelists and, upon completing it, went to western Sweden in the capacity as an evangelist. Reportedly having considered becoming a missionary to the Zulu's for more than a year, he expressed this desire to Kihlstedt and others in the leadership of

the Holiness Union at its annual conference in 1890. In December of that year Emanuelson, still a bachelor and twenty-eight years old, left Sweden for Natal. He disembarked in Durban on January 22nd, 1891 as the first missionary that the Holiness Union, itself not yet three years old, commissioned to the Zulus.⁹ Kihlstedt, who had been corresponding with Witt through 1890, appears to have arranged for the young artisan-turned-evangelist to begin his work in that port. Five months before Emanuelson sailed from Sweden, it was announced in *Trons Segrar* that he would initially earn a living as a carpenter in Durban while Witt tutored him in the Zulu language.¹⁰ Before Emanuelson reached Natal, there is no evidence that the Holiness Union considered doing any kind of missionary work in that colony apart from the loosely structured programme of ambulatory evangelisation which Witt had launched in Durban. The youthful state of the proto-denomination and the fact that it initially had only one missionary in Natal, and he a poorly educated and unseasoned one at that, probably militated against a more ambitious undertaking. From the outset, therefore, the Holiness Union's venture in Southern Africa was under the urban but unregimented aegis of Witt, although this arrangement did not endure.

Initially Emanuelson's stint in Durban went partly as anticipated. There is no evidence that he ever worked as a carpenter or held any other secular job there, but almost immediately he came under Witt's tutelage. Together the two men conducted a multifaceted ministry. The variety of their short-lived co-operation comes to the fore in the first few entries of Emanuelson's diary, written after he stepped ashore in Durban. On Saturday, January 24th, he and Witt visited an unspecified number of Norwegian ships in the harbour and invited the seamen on board to worship with the congregation of the Scandinavian Chapel, a non-denominational, generally baptist group that existed alongside and occasionally in tension with the city's young Norwegian Lutheran parish. On the following day they led two services there and subsequently arranged one for Africans.¹¹

This arrangement lasted only a few weeks. In March the restless Witt temporarily suspended his energetic programme of urban evangelisation and, together with Olaf Wettergreen of the FEAM, embarked on an evangelistic tour of the Tugela Valley. Writing to *Trons Segrar* that month from what he candidly described as "a

smoky Zulu hut", he assured readers in Sweden that it had been a joy to make Emanuelson's acquaintance in Durban and that the two had "had many precious meetings with our countrymen" before he had left the city. Witt gave no indication that he intended to resume his work in Durban. Instead, perhaps to the bewilderment of Swedes who had expected Emanuelson to remain there, Witt declared that he looked forward to escorting his neophyte colleague on a similar rural tour.¹²

This never transpired. Owing partly to his wife's failing health, Witt returned to Sweden before the end of 1891 and never again set foot on African soil, although he briefly preached in Durban again before leaving permanently. Left to his own devices and speaking only a smattering of English and Zulu, Emanuelson left the city on April 13th and accompanied a Norwegian lay missionary, Ludvig Olsen, on an evangelist tour of the Natal interior. The two Scandinavians visited mission stations, including the SKM establishment at Appelsbosch, and wandered from kraal to kraal to proclaim the Gospel. Witt may have also inspired this approach. By engaging in face-to-face evangelism, Emanuelson was compelled to increase his ability to speak Zulu.¹³ By July he had gone to the FEAM station, Ekutandaneni, near Stanger, where he assisted in the construction of a house and continued his informal language studies.¹⁴ The tone of his reports from Ekutandaneni suggests that he felt at home amongst his fellow Scandinavian free church missionaries there and intended to remain for an indefinite period. As late as August 1892 Emanuelson was still unofficially attached to that station and had begun to make forays into Zululand.¹⁵ At that stage, having spent a year and a half in Natal, appeared to have given up his original intention of being a missionary in Durban completely and to have thrown in his lot with the FEAM.

3. *SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN PIETERMARITZBURG*

Pietermaritzburg became the first enduring centre of Holiness Union missionary work in Natal. As was the case in every other urban sub-field in the region, the missionaries in question confronted migratory Africans living in abject poverty, subjected to racial discrimination, and otherwise suffering from dehumanising conditions. Considerably less is known about the circumstances under which blacks lived in Pietermaritzburg during the 1890's, than is for instance known about circumstances in Johannesburg, to cite one possible comparison. It is

nevertheless possible to portray the situation which faced Oscar Emanuelson when he arrived there in summary fashion.

Pietermaritzburg differed from Durban and Johannesburg during the 1890's in that it was not undergoing great population growth and did not have a rapidly expanding economy. In 1894 City Magistrate Charles Baxter lambasted the lethargy of the place in his report for the twelve-month period ending on 30 June. "Maritzburg - if it is ever to be more than a small market town, dead-alive for three parts of the year - needs a thorough awakening of its sleepy inhabitants", he declared. "Especially it needs one or two hotels ... with some attempt at elegance. It needs houses where a family can find a decent home, with proper offices for servants, and some of the conveniences which travellers seeking health and amusement have a right to expect".¹⁶ According to the census of 1895, Pietermaritzburg had 20 155 residents, divided into three categories: 11 309 "Europeans", 6 154 "Natives", and 2 692 "Asiatics".¹⁷

The black sector of the population had not suddenly increased dramatically, as it had in Durban or Johannesburg, but had rather grown at a slower rate since the middle of the nineteenth century. Economically, these Africans, most of them Zulu's, were scattered in many job categories, most of them unskilled and poorly paid. One such category that had attracted large numbers of blacks as well as some Indians by the 1890's was the ricksha business. In 1896, for example, the municipality issued no fewer than 3 075 licences for rickshas. The men employed in this trade performed an essential transportation service but hardly earned the respect of the city fathers. As the city magistrate put it with typical colonial condescension the following year, "the dirty and dilapidated [*sic*] state of most of the rickshas and the dirty clothing of the boys are a reproach to the Town".¹⁸

As in other Southern African cities by the 1890's, many of the blacks in Pietermaritzburg resided and, to some extent, conducted business, in squalid, poorly regulated conditions. So appalling was the living standard that the magistrate declared in 1897, "I favour the formation of Indian and Native locations with their own bazaars and police supervision; but, even without this, places such as I speak of, with all their filth, vice and drinking, ought certainly to be licensed houses subject at all times to police supervision". In their present virtually

unregulated state, he added, "these places are unspeakable dens of all sorts of vice into which the police dare not enter unless there is some unusual brawl or disturbance, or unless it be the occasional visit of the Sanitary Inspector". The squalor of Pietermaritzburg was not, however, in his eyes limited to the Africans and Indians. Some of the white-dominated central areas also seemed "a disgrace and a danger to the community".¹⁹

Immoderate consumption of alcohol also characterised life in Pietermaritzburg during the 1890s. In 1897 there were fully twenty-nine licensed retail wine and spirits dealers in the city. This figure, however, does not reveal the real extent of the trade. As the magistrate quoted above conceded, "great facility has existed, and no doubt still exists, for the illicit sale of liquor by means of back doors and back yards - places which cannot come under the eye of the patrolling policeman". Much of the illegal traffic, he was certain, involved black Africans. Again writing in a condescending, racist mode, he declared that "when Natives acquire a taste for drink they *will* get it one way or another". It may have been slight consolation for this magistrate that he had "not noticed any appreciable increase in drunkenness amongst the Natives", a stability which he attributed at least in part to legal measures. He explained that "they are usually fined heavily for a first offence [of public insobriety], and sent to gaol on a repetition of it". If his observations are remotely correct. However, most of the illegal sale of alcohol and heavy drinking of it did in fact go unnoticed. In 1896 there were only fifteen convictions for the sale of liquor to Africans, while only two Africans were indicted for selling it to fellow Africans, and both were acquitted. Furthermore, that year only twenty Africans and twenty-eight Indians were convicted for illegal possession of liquor.²⁰

Other crimes flourished in Pietermaritzburg during that decade. During the twelve-month period ending 30 June 1894, for example, the police made 4 275 arrests. A full 1 769 of the people apprehended forfeited their bail, while 2 579 were brought to court, chiefly for misdemeanours. 230 were acquitted and 267 were warned and discharged. 2 047 were subjected to varying degrees of punishment. However, 925 of them were merely fined. 875 were imprisoned, were peremptorily imprisoned, three were bound over to keep the peace, and 119 were whipped.²¹ The prison population that this system of

jurisprudence produced was relatively large, though not enormous. On 30 June 1891, for instance, there were 191 inmates in Pietermaritzburg Central Gaol, 170 of them black. Of those incarcerated Africans, 153 were convicted felons. By comparison, Durban Central Gaol, serving a city with a much larger uprooted black migrant population, then accommodated 410 prisoners, 366 of whom were Africans.²² The prison in Pietermaritzburg soon provided Emanuelson and other Holiness Union missionaries with another venue for conducting missionary work.

4. ESTABLISHING A MISSIONARY PRESENCE IN PIETERMARITZBURG

Had Emanuelson become an official FEAM missionary, it is questionable whether the Holiness Union would ever have developed urban work in Natal or even maintained a separate identity in that colony. Why he did not is a mystery. Emanuelson bade his temporary colleagues farewell and proceeded to Pietermaritzburg before the end of 1892, which already had well-established Anglican and other denominational missionary work. The question, on which the evidence sheds little light, is why Emanuelson settled there rather than returning to Durban when he apparently elected to apply his greatly augmented command of Zulu to urban evangelism.

Emanuelson did not record an explanation for this decision or how and precisely when he moved to Pietermaritzburg. The sketchy account of his work there in Ester Monson's amateurish biography is of no help whatsoever in this regard. It is possible that romantic love determined his decision to go to the colonial capital. Emanuelson had become well acquainted with one of the Swedish FEAM missionaries, Emelie Häggberg, who in 1890 had spent a fortnight in Pietermaritzburg recovering from exhaustion. For some unrecorded reason she decided to proceed there to continue her career in 1892. In a letter to *Trons Segrar* written in November of that year, she remarked that "our dear brother Oscar Emanuelson" had accompanied her from Ekutandaneni and, in addition to assisting her with moving, "helped me begin work in the hostels and got a home in order for us Swedes who are already here".²³ Häggberg's account is somewhat cryptic and of limited historiographical value, as she did not indicate whether Emanuelson had already been in Pietermaritzburg before helping her move there or who the homeless Swedes in that

city were. The nature of their relationship at that point and of who followed whom to Pietermaritzburg are uncertain. In any case, both Häggberg and Emanuelson were entrenched there by the end of 1892. They wed in August 1893.²⁴

For several years the Emanuelsons and, on a temporary basis, other Holiness Union missionaries conducted a loosely structured ministry in Pietermaritzburg. Lacking a suitable chapel, they were compelled to take their message to Zulu's, chiefly migratory labourers in various parts of the city. This was a mode of evangelisation which fitted their own ambulatory experience well and which they continued in varying degrees even after erecting a modest house of worship. The Emanuelsons' initial taste of Zulu religious life in Pietermaritzburg inspired them to develop a basic kerygmatic ministry. On their first Sunday in the city, they attended a service in an unspecified black chapel but found few people there and described the sermon as "dry". Undaunted by this experience, the two Swedes met a Zulu preacher named Umatibula on the street the following day. He introduced them to his congregation. The spiritual tenor struck a chord with the couple's background of pietist meetings in Sweden. Emelie commented movingly on the "weeping and sobbing by vexed sinners in the pews" and on the enthusiasm with which those in attendance sang. Particularly impressive was Umatibula's assertion that during that preceding week no fewer than forty-two of his auditors had expressed a willingness to receive salvation in Christ.²⁵

From the outset the Holiness Union received support from some of the other Scandinavians in Pietermaritzburg. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the fact that a Norwegian family named Reim, who returned to Norway, allowed the Emanuelsons and other missionaries who assisted them during the 1890's to stay in their house without purchasing it, which at that stage would not have been financially feasible. This hospitality provided an anchoring point for diverse missionary activities before the Holiness Union developed a permanent presence in Pietermaritzburg.²⁶

By the beginning of 1893, the Emanuelsons and their unofficial colleagues had spliced together a rudimentary schedule of evangelisation and related activities. Emelie described a typical week in considerable if incomplete detail. From 06h00, when they got up, until 09h00 she and her husband ate breakfast, prayed, and read the

Bible together with their colleagues. The ensuing two hours were devoted to language study. Then followed a period of household duties followed. In the afternoons the missionaries visited Zulu's in their homes "when our energy and the weather allow(ed) it". Emelie and another woman also addressed meetings of Zulu's "at inns and in so-called hotels for blacks". On Monday evenings they Swedes arranged "a kind of Bible class for women" which, however, only a few attended. On Tuesday evenings there was a meeting for Zulu's who worked for the railway, and on Wednesday evenings the Emanuelson's preached in a hostel for railway employees. On Thursday evenings they took the Gospel to hostels outside Pietermaritzburg. Emelie related that were they initially not welcome at one of these hostels because they lacked a specific denominational label. She confronted the initial tension by declaring that if the people in question did not want her and Oscar to preach to them they would take their message elsewhere. They received an invitation to return and also arrange worship on Sundays, which they were able to do on an irregular basis. The activities of these first Holiness Union missionaries in Pietermaritzburg do not appear to have included noteworthy involvement in any European congregation, possibly owing to the language barrier. This was becoming increasingly porous as they acquired fluency in English. The Emanuelsons and their colleagues would have denied that they were sectarians. The Holiness Union, did not regard itself as a denomination at that stage, but rather as a missionary movement. Nevertheless, Emelie reported in 1893 that its missionaries in Pietermaritzburg had Bible studies "on occasion" and a private Eucharistic service every Sunday at 09h00.²⁷ There is no evidence, however, that they were directly at odds with the existing European churches in Pietermaritzburg or with other missionaries, despite a few instances of intemperate rhetoric in letters to supporters in Sweden.

The next two Holiness Union missionaries to set foot in the Natal capital remained there only briefly, although both of them later played instrumental roles in developing the organisation's work in Durban. Hans Nilson (1867-1953), from Skåne, and Karl Johan Johanson (1868-1945), a native of Norra Fågelås in Västergötland, had both served as Holiness Union evangelists in Sweden since 1891. Both testified to having had powerful conversion experiences. Writing in a typical mode of pietistic subjectivity, Johanson related to fellow

members of the Holiness Union how he had undergone a spiritual crisis following his conversion, as sin continued to tempt him. He lacked assurance of his own salvation: "I began to struggle between sin and justification, and you can find a description of my life during that time in the last part of Romans 7", Johanson²⁸ confided. He described at length a year of inner spiritual warfare in his soul, culminating predictably in the victory of God over his sinful nature, which Johanson declared took place in the autumn of 1890.²⁸ Johanson's highly individualistic and subjective perception of salvation were characteristic of many people in the Holiness Union both during the 1890s and long after the turn of the century. It left a profound imprint on the organisation's urban missionary work, both in Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

Nilson and Johanson sailed from Göteborg on March 2nd, 1893 and landed hale and hearty on April 8th, in Durban, where Oscar Emanuelson, Olaf Wettergreen, and two other men met them. The personnel of the Holiness Union then travelled to Pietermaritzburg, where the two newcomers gained their first exposure to the work that had begun there.²⁹ After three months of such orientation in Pietermaritzburg, Nilson and Johanson attended the Emanuelson's wedding at the Scandinavian Chapel in Durban. The four Swedes spoke at several services there before setting out together on a strenuous journey to Zululand, where the Emanuelsons helped their less seasoned colleagues become established at a rural station, in Entembeni. The willingness of the Emanuelsons to leave their fledgling programme of evangelisation in Pietermaritzburg for more than three months, indicates how tenuous both the structure of that venture and the commitment of the Holiness Union to urban missions were at that point. Indeed, writing from Zululand in August 1893, Emelie declared that she and her husband were "extremely happy that God has allowed us to come to the people in their villages, even though from time to time we have to work in the hostels in Maritzburg". It is unclear which venue she believed they should give higher priority to, though one suspects from the tone of her letter that she found rural Zululand, despite the undeniable tribulations of life there, more appealing than the squalor of workers' hostels. Emelie regarded herself and her husband as still essentially itinerant evangelists. She described to Hedin how they had declined requests from Zulu's to remain in one place and teach them about Christianity

because their calling was to proclaim the Gospel in many locales.³⁰ By early November their ambulatory evangelism once again continued from one hostel to another in and near Pietermaritzburg,³¹ though by no means had the Emanuelsons turned their backs completely on rural missions. They continued to pursue their work on both fronts for several more years.

The next pair of Holiness Union missionaries to arrive in Natal also only stayed in Pietermaritzburg temporarily. Amy Broberg (1869-1931) was born in Sweden to a Swedish merchant navy officer and a woman of British ancestry, whom he had married in Natal. Jenny Häggberg (1866-1901) was a much younger sister of Emelie Emanuelson and had been active in the Holiness Union in Örebro before volunteering to go to Natal. These two women sailed from London in September 1893. They apparently planned to spend at least a few months in Pietermaritzburg, for shortly after arriving there they planted a garden with maize, potatoes, and other vegetables. In any case, Broberg and Häggberg, neither of whom could speak Zulu before landing in Natal or is known to have had previous experience in Africa, had little viable choice but to spend their first several months under the tutelage of the Emanuelsons.³²

Häggberg and Broberg started participating in hostel evangelism shortly after arriving in Pietermaritzburg, no doubt initially in a quite passive fashion. They perceived this form of ministry somewhat differently. Häggberg, reflecting more optimism than her partner, reported that she never felt more contented than in the midst of Zulu labourers at an impromptu religious meeting. She admitted that their quarters were "wretched" but nevertheless declared that her very limited command of Zulu did not prevent her from appreciating "the most blessed meetings." She stated that at nearly every meeting men announced their willingness to accept Jesus Christ and requested intercessory prayer on their own behalf.³³ Broberg, on the other hand, almost simultaneously described the hostels, barns, and stalls of Pietermaritzburg as "a hard field" and reported that they could only see results for their efforts every "now and then." Clearly disenchanted with the murkier side of urban life, she stated in December 1893 that she and Jenny Häggberg both looked forward to working amidst the people in kraals, preferably those who lived near

her Christian relatives who had extended free accommodation to them on their farm.³⁴

This did not come about as Broberg expected. In late January 1894 Oscar Emanuelson, maintaining his attachment to rural evangelism, took her and his sister-in-law on a brief tour to the vicinity of the Mgeni River east of Pietermaritzburg. There they visited kraals and very briefly assisted a Dutch Reformed clergyman whom Emanuelson identified only as "missionary Hoffmeyer [*sic*] from Cape Town." He was possibly referring to Stephanus Johannes Gerhardus Hofmeyr (1839-1905), who was preaching to assembled Zulu's. Emanuelson left Broberg and Häggberg on a farm nearby where they could have more exposure to the Zulu language. Eventually Broberg married Hans Nilson and devoted many years of her life to conventional rural missionary work before this couple assumed responsibility for the Holiness Union's work in Durban. Still dividing his labours, Emanuelson then returned to Pietermaritzburg, where he and his wife resumed their toil in the hostels. They also began to arrange services outdoors at the city's marketplace on Sunday afternoons. Emanuelson reported that "many hundred people from several tribes" generally attended these gatherings.³⁵ Still declining to devote himself fully to consolidating the Holiness Union's programme in Pietermaritzburg, however, he went to Durban in June 1894 to lead several services at the Scandinavian Chapel. He then continued with his wife, Häggberg and Broberg on an evangelistic tour of Zululand, where they visited between five and ten kraals a day.³⁶

5. TOWARDS AN ESTABLISHED PRESENCE IN PIETERMARITZBURG

By 1895 the Emanuelsons "again reached a fork in the road", as Emelie described their situation that year. The work they had begun in Pietermaritzburg, but led only inconsistently, appeared to have stagnated. Perhaps unwilling to accept any of the responsibility for this state of affairs, she attributed the lack of visible progress to incursions by the Salvation Army and Roman Catholic missionaries. As Natal became increasingly crowded with competing missionaries, the waxing of British imperialism in Southern Africa seemed almost providential. "We believe that God wants us to go farther into the interior of "Africa, to Matabeleland", reported Emelie Emanuelson,

adding that she and her husband, like many other missionaries, had applied for land there.³⁷

They never set foot in what is now Zimbabwe. In 1896, with Leander Starr Jameson in gaol after his disastrous invasion of the South "African Republic, the Matabele rebelled against the resented Chartered Company, which British colonists had imposed on them. The revolt was eventually crushed, leaving the Matabele tribal system in ruins. Instead of crossing the Limpopo into this chaotic situation, therefore, the childless Emanuelsons spent 1896 in Natal, dividing their time between the capital and at least three rural districts. During the last few months of the year, however, apparent changes in the religious climate kept them in Pietermaritzburg. Oscar wrote gleefully in January 1897 that "far-ranging revivals have broken out in several quarters, and they are so pervasive that nothing similar has been witnessed during the fifty [*sic*] years that missionary work has been done in this country". Particularly heartening was the willingness of many young Africans to accept Christianity, although Emanuelson noted that many older people who had already done so had recently been "renewed through baptism of the Spirit".³⁸ The awakening had touched both blacks and whites, he emphasised. Early in 1897 he baptised five British soldiers who, though originally earmarked for Matabeleland, had not gone further than Pietermaritzburg, where the Swede had administered the sacrament.³⁹ The scope of the perceived spiritual change in Natal's capital may have been a significant factor in the decision of the Emanuelsons to remain there and conduct much of their ministry in harmony with it.

In 1897 the Emanuelsons began another phase of their work, which became a lasting and central part of the programme in Pietermaritzburg. Oscar received permission to visit black prisoners who had been sentenced to death, in nearby Greytown. His wife was also granted the privilege of speaking to female inmates.⁴⁰ Both the Emanuelsons and their successors in the Holiness Union made such visitation a regular corner stone of their weekly activity. An awareness of the need for a prison ministry probably also contributed to the decision to establish a permanent mission in Pietermaritzburg. Material need was another factor which kept the Emanuelsons in the city during a time of flagging financial support from the Holiness Union. After visiting them in August 1897, Hans Nilson reported that

Oscar had been compelled to supplement his meagre income through physical work.⁴¹ However, this did not greatly disrupt their ministry. The Emanuelsons generally led four meetings a week in workers' hostels and for black soldiers. Emelie was certain that God was blessing these gatherings, at which "many stand up and say that they are choosing Jesus". She admitted that evangelisation in the "Sodom and Gomorrah" of Pietermaritzburg was often an "arduous" task, but she nevertheless proclaimed her joy in being allowed to engage in it. By November 1897 Emelie was leading meetings for black female prisoners every Saturday and Sunday morning and could report that no fewer than eleven of these women had accepted Christianity. However she found the warden to be a "very ungodly and hard" man. She also believed that the highest ranking judge in Pietermaritzburg, a Roman Catholic, was granting preferential treatment to missionaries of his own persuasion, though whether and how this inhibited her own work she did not state.⁴²

The Holiness Union finally secured a permanent site in Pietermaritzburg in 1898. Emelie explained to supporters in Sweden that she and her husband had prayed for divine guidance for the future of their mission since mid-1896. During this period Hans Nilson had visited them and conveyed the need for a building in the town to the leaders of the Holiness Union. He argued that "no-one does more hostel work in Pietermaritzburg than Oscar [Emanuelson]," but that some of the blacks whose conversion to Christianity his preaching had prompted had "fallen into Catholic hands" or gone elsewhere because the Holiness Union did not have a congregation which could welcome them. "How good it would be if Oscar could say to them, 'There is our chapel; come in!'" Nilson laid the matter of paying for such a facility on the consciences of members of the Holiness Union.⁴³ Its leaders were sympathetic to this appeal. Kihlstedt informed the Emanuelsons that he would implore the members in Sweden to contribute funds for the construction of a chapel. With this assurance, though without the certainty that money would actually be forthcoming, the Emanuelsons purchased a site near the railway station on the west side of Pietermaritzburg. The building that Oscar erected at 7 Pietermaritz Street initially consisted of "two small rooms and an even smaller kitchen", although the Emanuelsons correctly envisaged its expansion. From the outset, they anticipated not only inhabiting it themselves, but also opening it to "poor women with small

children who wish to escape sin and become good people and children of God". The Emanuelsons had hoped to build a chapel first, but in order to secure a loan of sufficient size to construct such a building they first had to put up a more modest structure as security. A tent therefore served as a provisional sanctuary. By leaving their previous quarters at 419 Longmarket Street, the Emanuelsons were able to place their monthly rent into a fund for the projected chapel.⁴⁴

Together with a permanent site, the Holiness Union acquired the services of an African evangelist named Johannes Mbezies. The son of a chief in Basutoland, he had become a Christian before reportedly being forced to leave his homeland to escape religious persecution. Mbezies worked in Pietermaritzburg, where he came into contact with the Emanuelsons. During the mid-1890s he accompanied them on evangelistic tours in Zululand, then left in late 1895 or early 1896 to seek employment in Johannesburg. When his father died, Mbezies declined an opportunity to succeed him as chief, choosing instead to return to Pietermaritzburg and work for the Holiness Union.⁴⁵ He did so in 1898, bringing with him a wife. An anonymous donor contributed twenty-five shillings towards his monthly salary. The Emanuelsons covered the balance. Emelie expressed hope that by exercising considerable frugality Mbezies and his bride could live on his stipend, a task which she believed would be possible when, after completing the chapel, a room and a kitchen could be built for them on the premises.⁴⁶ Like many other evangelists whom various missionary societies employed at that time, Mbezies apparently did not have any formal education in theology. His employment in this capacity nevertheless represented the first stage of the indigenisation of the Holiness Union's urban work in Natal. Moreover, the Emanuelsons undeniably shared some of the widespread European prejudices concerning the superiority of their own culture to that of the African indigenes, but their willingness to inhabit the same quarters as those people set them apart from many other missionaries.

The chapel was dedicated in October 1898. The presence of this modest brick building in Pietermaritz Street marked the beginning of an era of permanence and relative stability in the Holiness Union's mission in Pietermaritzburg. Its infancy, however, did not seem to foreshadow a robust adulthood. Attendance at services there was initially disappointing, and at the end of the year only about thirty

Africans worshipped in the chapel, many of them irregularly. The seating capacity of the building was estimated at between 150 and 200. After three months of weekly preaching there, the Emanuelsons could not report a single baptism. In fairness to their effectiveness as missionaries it should be emphasised that they had not yet fully emerged from their previous roles as itinerant evangelists, who did not expect to administer that sacrament frequently.⁴⁷

The programme gradually gained more structure and vitality during 1899. Before the end of that year there were three services every Sunday at the chapel. The one in the morning attracted few people, whereas the one at 15h00 drew "somewhat more", and in the evenings Oscar Emanuelson often preached in a full sanctuary. Generally an African assistant officiated on Sunday mornings while Oscar preached in workers' hostels. His weekly proclamation at 09h00 in a hostel for railway employees seemed especially promising. Prayer meetings on Saturday evenings in the chapel evolved into Bible study sessions, supplementing the other forms of worship there. Meanwhile, his wife continued to hold meetings for female inmates at 09h00 on those days. She reported that only a curfew of 21h00 imposed on blacks in Pietermaritzburg prevented even more people from attending the evening services. This restriction on personal mobility forced the meetings to end by 20h30. A few years later the SKM encountered a similar problem in Johannesburg. Emelie Emanuelson assured readers of *Trons Segrar* in September 1899 that "not a week has passed without one or more people deciding to serve the Lord". She admitted, however, that the constantly shifting composition of those who assembled for worship at the chapel had precluded the formation of an organised congregation.⁴⁸

Like many other missions which launched urban work late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth centuries, the Holiness Union soon undertook an educational programme in which missionaries offered courses in literacy and other subjects in the evening. This, too, got off to a slow start in 1898. Initially only ten or twelve people, all of them men, attended the evening school, which was held at the new chapel. Six months later, though, Oscar Emanuelson wrote that the number had risen to over sixty. The part-time teaching staff had also grown and become ethnically diverse. One of the first teaching assistants whom the Emanuelsons engaged was a pupil named Josef

Suma, who had attended their evening school from its inception and shown particular promise. An English Natalian identified only as "Mr White" soon began to teach on Tuesday evenings, and an unidentified Norwegian who had shortly before undergone a conversion experience contributed his services on Thursdays. A young Baptist lady, Miss Grey, who worked in the distribution of Christian literature in Pietermaritzburg and who could speak Zulu fluently, offered lessons in vocal music on Friday evenings, using the chapel's small organ, and concluded each session with a devotion. Oscar Emanuelson envisaged expansion of the educational programme and believed that having at least one more Zulu assistant instructor who could teach elsewhere in the city, would be particularly beneficial.⁴⁹

6. CONCLUSION

On the eve of the Second Anglo-Boer War, therefore, and approximately seven years after its first missionary to Africa cautiously set foot in the capital of Natal, the Holiness Union had a perceptibly developing and somewhat diversified programme of urban missionary work there. It encompassed worship at a new chapel located near the heart of the city as well as at other venues in and near Pietermaritzburg. It also included increasingly attractive evening courses for workers. The mortgage bond on the building was paid off less than a year after the edifice was dedicated. Gone were the days of indefinite itinerancy through the countryside and inconsistent preaching in workers' hostels. Johannes Mbezies had found it impossible to support his small family on a meagre salary, but other blacks and whites had begun to assist the Emanuelsons in a variety of ways. The Holiness Union, in short, ended the nineteenth century with an urban programme remarkably similar to those which other missions had already launched in Southern Africa or were on the verge of doing. The theological differences that set this proto-denomination apart from the Scandinavian Lutheran missionary societies, especially the spiritual subjectivity of the former, did not exert a permanent influence on the general scope of the missionary work it undertook in Pietermaritzburg.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Frederick Hale, "Scandinavian Urban Evangelisation in Southern Africa: The Free East Africa Mission in Durban, 1889-1899", *Svensk Missionstidskrift*, "Launching Scandinavian Urban Evangelisation in Southern Africa: The Free East Africa Mission in Durban, 1889-1899," *Svensk Missionstidskrift*, LXXXVI, no. 2 (1998), pp. 227-250.
- ² The present article is part of a broader personal research project on the history of Scandinavian urban missions in Southern Africa, conducted chiefly at the University of Uppsala. I wish to express my gratitude to that institution, particularly the participants in its missiological research seminar, and the staff of the Swedish Holiness Union, especially Rose-Marie Nilsson, in Kumla for their assistance.
- ³ "The Missionary Career and Spiritual Odyssey of Otto Witt" (Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1989) is the most comprehensive study of this independent-minded Swedish divine.
- ⁴ Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to C.J.A. Kihlstedt, 12 January 1890, in *Trons Segrar*, I, no. 3 (March 1890), p. 49.
- ⁵ Emelie Häggberg (Durban) to *Missionæren*, 8 January 1890, in *Trons Segrar*, I, no. 3 (March 1890), pp. 50-51.
- ⁶ Otto Witt (Durban) to C.J.A. Kihlstedt, 16 June 1890, in *Trons Segrar*, I, no. 8 (August 1890), pp. 138-140.
- ⁷ A convenient but tendentious and entirely unscholarly survey of the origins of the Holiness Union's field in China is G. Fredberg and J. Sonesson, *Efter Tjugufem År* (Kumla: Helgelseförbundets Förlag, 1915).
- ⁸ "Vår Kinamission och Zulumission", *Trons Segrar*, I, no. 11 (November 1890), pp. 196-197.
- ⁹ Oscar Emanuelson, "Frälst och kallad", in Ester Monson, *Pionjär bland zulufolket* (Kumla: Helgelseförbundets Förlag, 1953), pp. 9-14.

- 10 Untitled announcement by Axel Kihlstedt, Nelly Hall, and
Edvard Hedin in *Trons Segrar*, I, no. 8 (August 1890), p. 143.
- 11 Monson, *Pionjär bland zulufolket*, p. 22.
- 12 Otto Witt (Emamba) to *Trons Segrar*, 9 March 1891, in *Trons
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- 13 Oscar Emanuelson (Noordsberg) to *Trons Segrar*, 14 May
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- 14 Oscar Emanuelson (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Trons
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- 15 Oscar Emanuelson (Umahlansa) to *Trons Segrar*, 8 April 1892,
in *Trons Segrar*, III, no. 12 (June 1892), pp. 182-184; Oscar
Emanuelson (Eshowe) to Nelly Hall, 25 April 1892, in *Trons
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Emanuelson (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Trons Segrar*,
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317.
- 16 Charles Baxter, "Annual Report of the Resident Magistrate, City
Division, for the Year Ending June 30, 1894", *Colony of Natal.
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- 17 "Report by the Magistrate of the City Division for the Year
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Printers, 1897), Part II - Magisterial, p. B.
- 18 "Report by the Magistrate of the City Division for the Year
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Part II. - Magisterial, p. B 3.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. B 4.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. B 2.

- 21 Baxter, "Annual Report of the Resident Magistrate, City Division, for the Year Ending June 30, 1894", p. B 1.
- 22 "Gaols and Prisoners, and Criminal Statistics", *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1890-1* (Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, Government Printers, 1891), pp. AA 2 - AA 3.
- 23 Emelie Häggberg (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 15 November 1892, in *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 2 (15 January 1893), pp. 30-31.
- 24 Oscar Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to Edvard Hedin, 13 June 1893, in *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 15 (1 August 1893), p. 3.
- 25 Emelie Häggberg (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 15 November 1892, in *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 2 (15 January 1893), pp. 30-31.
- 26 Monson, Pionjär bland zulufolket, p. 35.
- 27 Emelie Häggberg (Pietermaritzburg) to Edvard Hedin, 18 January 1893, in *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 5 (1 March 1893), pp. 78-80.
- 28 K.J. Johanson and Hans Nilsson, "Personliga vittnesbörd af våra två senast utgångna Zulumissionärer", *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 13 (1 July 1893), pp. 202-203.
- 29 Hans Nilsson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 10 April 1893, in *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 11 (1 June 1893), pp. 166-168.
- 30 Emelie Emanuelson (Umsundusi River, Zululand) to Edvard Hedin, 26 August 1893, p. 320.
- 31 Oscar Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 8 November 1893, in *Trons Segrar*, IV, no. 24 (15 December 1893), pp. 389-391.
- 32 Jenny Häggberg (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 18 November 1893, in *Trons Segrar*, V, no. 1 (1 January 1893), pp. 10-13.
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- 35 Oscar Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 20
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- 38 Oscar Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 9
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- 39 Oscar Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 28 May
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- ⁴⁷ Emelie Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 30 December 1898, in *Trons Segrar*, X (1899), pp. 75-76.
- ⁴⁸ Emelie Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 23 September 1899, in *Trons Segrar*, X (1899), pp. 434-436.
- ⁴⁹ Emelie Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 30 December 1898, pp. 75-76; Oscar Emanuelson (Pietermaritzburg) to *Trons Segrar*, 22 April 1899, in *Trons Segrar*, X (1899), pp. 234-235.